

A SOLID SURVEY (HOUSEHOLD WASTE SURVEY)



Contact Information

Athens-Clarke County Recycling Division
Program Education Specialist
706.613.3512
www.acc-recycle.org

Grades

K-12 (can be adapted for all grade levels)

Objectives

Students will be able to: 1) identify important elements of a questionnaire, apply that knowledge in conducting interviews, and take a survey of members of the community; and 2) tabulate/discuss the results of the survey and analyze the findings.

Method

Students use a questionnaire to survey members of the community about their habits and lifestyles as they relate to waste management.

Materials

Student sheet (included)

Vocabulary

Biodegradable, pesticide, reuse, recycle, source separation, waste, waste management

Procedure

1. Background: Most people are not aware of local solid waste management problems and how daily consumption and lifestyle patterns contribute to these problems. Asking people about their buyer preferences and waste disposal habits accomplishes three things: 1) Data can be collected to document consumer habits which contribute to waste disposal problems; 2) the people being interviewed focus their attention on the issue; and 3) the group conducting the survey becomes more aware of public attitudes toward waste and waste management.

2. Initiate this activity by reviewing with students the social issue of waste and waste management, especially as it relates to your community.
 - A. Briefly discuss these terms: biodegradable, reuse, recycling collection center, pesticide, source separation.
 - B. Discuss with students the value of first identifying the consumption habits of a community when seeking to find solutions to waste management problems. Using the "questionnaire/interview" approach to obtain information has two advantages: 1) The collected data helps to identify specific buyer preferences and disposal habits; and 2) the process of thinking about and answering a question helps to focus a person's attention on the issue.
3. Give each student a copy of the student sheet "TRASH TALK SURVEY," included. Discuss the questionnaire with them, pointing out important elements of the questionnaire and discussing its makeup.
 - A. Have the students look at the answer column of the questionnaire. Why do most questions offer only two answers, not three?
 - B. Have the students look at the questions. Define subjective and objective for students. Then ask if the questions are subjective or objective. Will they be easy to answer? Do they cover several waste management issues? With what issues do they deal?
 - C. Divide the students into pairs. One partner will ask the other the survey questions. When finished, they will reverse roles.
 - D. Explain to the students that they are to answer the questions as they pertain to their own households. 1) Make sure that each student understands and answers each question. 2) When all questions are answered, collect the questionnaires.
4. Have the students use the questionnaire to conduct a school or community survey.
 - A. Review with the students these important guidelines to remember when conducting a survey:
 - 1) Arrange in advance for the appointment; suit the time and convenience of the person whom you wish to survey. Briefly explain the purpose of the survey. (Remember, he/she is doing you a favor by taking time to answer your questions.
 - 2) Begin the meeting by introducing yourself and restating why you are conducting the survey. (If you already know the person, tell him/her who your teacher is and explain that this is a class project to learn how to conduct a survey.) Explain how the survey results will be used.
 - 3) Use the prepared questionnaire so that time is used efficiently. Significant comments can be written on the back of the questionnaire.
 - 4) Listen carefully to responses, and mark the questionnaire carefully and accurately.
 - 5) At the end of the survey, thank the person for his/her time and responses.
 - B. Assist the students in determining whom they will survey (family, friends, neighbors, etc.) Assign a given number of surveys to each student. Be sure each student understands the procedure. (Separate the community into categories, for example, single, married, retired, different professions, age, parents, occupation, etc.)
 - C. Have the students complete their surveys.
 - D. Analyze the findings by calculating: 1) how much trash is discarded per person; 2) the percentage of households using recyclable detergent containers; 3) the percentage of households that separate wastes for recycling; 4) the percentage of households that use herbicides and insecticides; and 5) other factors you determine are pertinent.

5. When the community survey and the calculations above have been completed, help the students tabulate and evaluate their findings.
 - A. Tabulate the answers to one group of questions at a time.
 - B. When the survey data have been tabulated, ask the students to discuss significant implications of their findings. What are some possible interpretations of these findings?
 - C. Have the students write a report of the study stating: 1) purpose of the survey, 2) target population, 3) means of obtaining the information, 4) data results, graphing where applicable: bar, line, dot, circle, etc., 5) implications of the findings, 6) conclusions reached as a result of the activity.
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Source: Waste In Place, 1990 Keep America Beautiful, Inc.

TRASH TALK SURVEY**QUESTION**

1. How many persons live in your home?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

2. About how many 30 gallon bags of garbage are discarded from your home each week?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

3. Does anyone in your home buy beverages in aluminum cans? YES NO

A. If yes, are these used cans separated for recycling? YES NO

B. Is there aluminum collection nearby? YES NO

4. Do you buy or receive the newspaper? YES NO

A. If yes, is this newspaper saved for recycling? YES NO

B. If not, are the newspapers used for a second purpose after having been read? YES NO

C. Is there a paper collection center nearby? YES NO

5. Are pesticides used in your home for controlling roaches, ants, mice, or garden pests? YES NO

6. Are pesticides used for controlling weeds in lawns or unwanted plants in the garden? YES NO

7. Do you know the brand of laundry detergent used in your home? YES NO

A. If yes, what brand is used? _____

B. Does the brand you use say "RECYCLABLE" on the container? YES NO

C. Does your community accept this container at a collection site for recyclable materials? YES NO

8. Are other materials besides cans, plastics, and paper collected in your home for recycling? YES NO